ENGAGE
The BMS World Mission magazine

I WILL STAND Catch up with Z, and hear how your support of I Will Stand has changed lives

WINDS OF CHANGE How the pandemic put the Bible back on France’s bestseller lists

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS A mission worker reflects on her hopes for Afghanistan

ISAAC’S PROTECTING CHILDREN IN UGANDA THIS CHRISTMAS

Could you help him?
Time flies, doesn’t it? I can’t quite believe that once again, I have the pleasure of wishing BMS World Mission supporters a very happy Christmas! Whether this year has felt encouraging or more of a challenge, I pray that Issue 52 of Engage leaves you feeling that your support of BMS in 2021 has not gone unnoticed.

From sharing the gospel with our neighbours in France (page 7) to supporting Christians in hard places we’ll likely never go (page 13), you’ve enabled mission work that will have an eternal impact. Also in this issue, you’ll read about urgent relief work that’s changing lives in the here and now, such as the flood preparedness training that’s helping village communities to protect precious documents in rising waters and getting kids back into school (page 16).

Christmas is a time when Christians rejoice in the promise of peace between God and humankind in the coming of his Messiah. But for so many children around the world who suffer abuse, the idea of peace must seem very remote. That’s why our Christmas appeal for 2021 is all about protecting children at risk in Uganda, providing training, urgent intervention and therapy through incredible BMS-supported workers. Find out more about how you could protect a child this Christmas on page 10.

I really hope you enjoy reading Issue 52 of Engage and that you’re left feeling that your prayers, donations and support have had an amazing impact in 2021. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.

God bless you,
Hannah
Editor

Write to me at magazine@bmsworldmission.org
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Light in the darkness in Afghanistan
The world watched with sadness as the Taliban takeover swept across Afghanistan earlier this summer. The future of Afghanistan is uncertain, and we ask for your continued prayers for its people, and for BMS World Mission workers who serve in the country, as they navigate how best they can support communities in need. We caught up with Mary*, who has been working in Afghanistan since 2019, about her hopes for the nation’s future.

“Leading up to the evacuation, we started to notice that [in our area of the country] there were fewer women on the streets. The men started to grow beards. And there was a real atmosphere of fear and hopelessness. All we could do was pray.

“[Since the Taliban’s takeover] there is some kind of normality. The men are back at work, the children are back at school. A lot of the women are still at home. But they’ve said that it’s a very uneasy normality. We’ve heard what the new government has said about allowing women to do various jobs and so on. But that happened last time. We need to see what they actually do rather than what they say they’re going to do.

“If you look at the situation in Afghanistan over the last century, let alone the preceding ones, it has always been a tough place. But there is still light there. There are still people who are working, Afghans and expats, who are working to bring life and hope there and to improve the lot of these people. So we don’t want to despair. We can be sad, but actually, our God’s bigger than this.

“My hope is that God will turn this around. Because I don’t know anybody else that can. And for that we desperately need people to pray and to keep praying for Afghanistan.”

*Name changed

1997: BMS World Mission begins working in Afghanistan

Areas of work:
- community development
- mental health support
- agricultural training
- palliative care
- water and sanitation projects

www.bmsworldmission.org
IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD.
Kang-San Tan

Christians believe that salvation history is moving towards a time when Christ will come again to restore God’s Kingdom – a culmination which is also a new beginning. In Christ’s first coming at Christmas, we look forward ultimately to this promised restoration. This Christmas, let's pay attention more than ever to the wonder that the coming of Christ promises.

And let’s remember that this hope that lies within our hearts is also a timely message for a suffering world. Christmas, after a year of pandemic restrictions, reminds us that this world matters to God, the world’s poor are loved by God, and that fullness of life can be found in Jesus Christ.

What hope this news brings to people grappling with a loss of control, employment, and disruption to life and work.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1). What will it cost us to live out such a joyous story for the blessing of many? Some will take this message to the nations, yet wherever we are this Christmas, all of us can pray and give.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE? THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT!

An app launched by BMS World Mission’s partner in Mozambique helps people better understand the law. Part developed by the Association of Christian Lawyers, Mozambique (AMAC), the app is there to inform people about five areas of the law – family, land, consumer protection, employment and the highway code – and to enable them to send queries to AMAC to get help if they need it.

“This app is a really great way to spread knowledge to thousands of Mozambicans about their legal rights,” says BMS worker Jane Edwards, part of the team involved in the app’s creation. Please pray that this app will help spread justice across Mozambique!

VOLCANO RELIEF IN D R CONGO

Round 400,000 people were displaced and over 1,000 homes destroyed when Mount Nyiragongo erupted back in May in D R Congo. Thanks to generous BMS supporters who gave to our disaster relief fund, we were able to provide vital support to families at risk there.

Nearly 300 people were reached with emergency food and packs of practical items, such as blankets and face masks. “We’re so glad we were able to reach these families,” says BMS’ Overseas Team Leader for Relief, Rachel Conway-Doel. “Thank you so much to the BMS supporters who have made this possible.”
Thank you

Standing together
Thank you so much to the fantastic audience who tuned in to I Will Stand Live, our event taking you into the heart of our Harvest appeal for 2021. From Dumfries to Swansea, Bournemouth to Whitley Bay, around a hundred of you tuned in from all four corners of the UK, with hundreds more clocking up views on our YouTube channel in the days that followed. Your kind comments left in the livestream chat shared that you’d found the event “fascinating, challenging and humbling”. We second that! Find out more about the impact your support of I Will Stand has had over on page 13.

Summer appeal update!
You’ve now raised an incredible £67,514 for Covid-19 relief and vaccines for our brothers and sisters around the world. Thank you!

Marathon for maternal health

When Emma Mohr’s brother-in-law encouraged her to do her first five-kilometre parkrun back in 2017, she couldn’t have imagined that she’d be looking back just a few years later with two marathons under her belt. It was the motivation of a personal challenge that convinced her to book her first marathon during the pandemic, but when a dear member of Emma’s church family passed away, it was completing the course in her memory that carried Emma over the finish line. “And at the end of the marathon, I didn’t say ‘Never again!’” says Emma. “At least, I only did for a day! It then became about, well, how could I make a difference? What could I support?”

For her second marathon in October, Emma chose to raise money for BMS World Mission, after having supported the work of BMS for years through her church. The congregation had recently partnered with the Shrubsoles, mission workers at Guinebor II hospital in Chad, and Gareth Shrubsole got in touch with Emma to share that the hospital would really value funds raised for life-saving C-section surgeries on its maternity ward. Emma smashed her marathon, which she chose to do at the pace of a fast walk – raising an amazing £1,110. The money raised has the potential to save 40 lives, through subsidising C-sections for 20 mothers and their babies. When a Chadian mother has a one in nine chance of dying during childbirth, we’re so thankful that supporters like Emma are walking, running and sprinting their way towards making a difference.

Maternal health services at Guinebor II

www.bmsworldmission.org
Winds of change

The Covid-19 pandemic has put the Bible back on France’s bestseller lists, and a new openness into people’s hearts.

Words: Hannah Watson
Images: Courtesy of John Wilson and Jérémie Lockel

Work grinding to a halt. Routines disrupted. People thrown into limbo, finding they suddenly had uncurbed time to themselves. On the other side of the channel, lockdown life was playing out in much the same way as it had in the UK. But as Jérémie Lockel, a French theology student, was noticing, there were changes happening on a heart-level for ordinary Parisians going through a once-in-a-century pandemic. Problems in the home began to surface. Divorces and domestic violence were on the rise. And, most surprising of all, the Bible hit number one on Fnac, the French retail chain (and cultural stalwart)’s sales of ‘Philosophy and Religion’ titles. “During Covid, there was a huge rise in people buying Bibles,” explains Jérémie. “To me, it signalled that a lot more people were asking themselves questions about what gave their lives meaning.”

Jérémie’s degree in theology is preparing him to become a Baptist minister, and as he studies, his accommodation is being part-funded with the help of BMS supporters. Contrary to what one might expect, none of his friends were thrown by a young, passionate man of 27 deciding to dedicate his life to ministry in France. “For most of the people I’m close to, it didn’t shock them,” says Jérémie, laughing. “No-one said, ‘What?! You’re going to become a pastor? I wasn’t expecting that at all.’”

The supportive reaction of Jérémie’s friends might seem surprising only because, for years, the story that’s been told about evangelism in France has been one of secularism and scepticism. We’ve come to expect stories of people in France who inherited lots of cultural baggage about church along with the atheism passed down by their parents. It’s why BMS World Mission counts our nearest neighbour among the least-evangelised nations we work in, despite the rich religious heritage that gave the country sites from Rocamadour to Mont Saint-Michel. It’s why John and Sue Wilson, the BMS workers who head up Jérémie’s
church, have dedicated over 30 years of their lives to church leadership and evangelism in France – and it’s why they, like him, have been so encouraged by the openness they’ve seen in people’s approach to Christianity during the pandemic. It seems that in the familiar story told about Christianity in France, a new chapter might be beginning.

Jérémie was so excited by Fnac’s bestseller list that he shared a link to the news on his Facebook page, and John and Sue agree that change is in the air. “Evangelicals are currently the fastest growing religious group in France,” John explains. At a recent meeting of the European Baptist Federation, Sue found herself chatting with others about the unlikely conversations they kept having with friends, colleagues and strangers, characterised by questions about religion that Sue had never previously heard asked. Both John and Sue were surprised and delighted in equal measure by encounters like one they had with Lucas*, a second-year university student from the Sorbonne, who turned up at their church with a Bible he had bought during lockdown and which he needed help to understand.

The pandemic certainly seems to have played a big role in the freshness that John and Sue feel has characterised their recent conversations with seekers, but they think there’s more going on than the soul-searching of long, difficult lockdowns. A younger generation unburdened by preconceptions about church are beginning to ask life’s big questions. John and Sue recently conducted a wedding between a bride and groom who they feel very much represent this new generation of seekers. The groom came from a Catholic background, and the bride’s great-grandfather was a Protestant minister. “People have seen religion in their families, but not necessarily experienced it for themselves,” says Sue. “Their parents were already non-practising, and their grandparents were maybe only nominally believers before that.” When it came to choosing readings for the ceremony, the couple settled on Bible passages that really meant something to them, and Sue noticed a new openness in conversations towards things of faith. And as more young people filter through the doors of John, Sue and Jérémie’s church, the congregation are taking advantage of the opportunity to reinvent how it feels when you step inside the building. Church used to be a place of classical pews and dark paint, but now newcomers might discover a settee, soft chair, or other furnishings that help them to feel relaxed – even to feel at home.

There’s another group of people now very much represented in the French evangelical church who are changing how religion is perceived: international Christians arriving in Paris from all over the world.

"WE NEED TO BE MISSIONARIES IN THE NEW WORLD"
In recent months, John and Sue have welcomed refugees and migrants from countries as diverse as Angola, D R Congo and Ghana, to name just a few. Where these new arrivals are believers, it’s often the sense of a Christian or even a Baptist connection that spans continents that helps them to feel at home. There is a sense of things coming full circle, where secular Westerners are now being witnessed to by Christians arriving from overseas who bring with them a living, missionary faith. “There’s no doubt that the African community is the strongest, most vibrant group of Christians in France,” says John. “They’re joyful, faithful, and they’re witnessing.” Jérémie agrees that there is much that French Christians are learning from their international brothers and sisters. “I think we learn from all Christians – if you gathered one million Christians together, you’d find one million different ways of evangelising. But when I think of the African continent and what we can learn there as Europeans, I think there’s a passion, a zeal and a warmth that I don’t see as much in Europe.

GOD CAN CHANGE THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE OF A COUNTRY

There’s also an ‘anchored-ness’ to people’s faith.”

Among all this good news, there is a shadow being cast over religious groups in France. The introduction of a new law aimed at combatting religious extremism has had some Christians worried that its application could restrict the freedom of expression for all people of faith. But John, Sue and Jérémie are not panicking. “We can either go into ‘persecution mentality’, explains John, “Or we can say, ‘You know what Jesus says? Rejoice and be glad’. Instead of being frightened of the new world, we need to be missionaries in the new world, and that means learning to communicate and learning to connect. It’s what mission is all about.”

“Name changed

Please pray for France

“We really believe that the support we’ve received, particularly prayer support and the financial support, has helped us to be where we are,” says Sue. “When we first came out to France, it was a very dark place spiritually. I think people can really be encouraged, to see that God can change the spiritual climate of a country.”

As the next generation prepare for ministry, John, Sue and Jérémie ask you to pray:

John: “It’s really exciting and thrilling to see these French Christians who have got a passion for mission, evangelism and social justice. There are investing themselves, committing themselves and reaching out to their communities. They have many fewer resources than we do. Please pray for them.”

Sue: “Please pray for encouragement, and call upon God to do new things across Europe.”

Jérémie: Please pray for my second year of studies. And for the French Church, please pray that it would remain relevant as it speaks into each aspect of society. Pray for revival in France, for a Church that is invigorated and following God’s Spirit.

*Name changed

**GOD CAN CHANGE THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE OF A COUNTRY**
This Christmas, give a child in Uganda the gift of safety.

In northern Uganda, where years of civil war and poverty have already combined to make life challenging, Covid-19 has pushed many families to breaking point. With parents out of work and schools closed, financial and emotional strain has hit hard – and, in many households, it’s the children that bear the brunt.

13-year-old Aber* was excelling at school and showing huge potential until lockdown threatened to take all of that away. With schools closed, and Aber spending more time at home, her family saw an opportunity to make some much-needed money.

“They were planning to sell Aber to a man, to get her married off,” explains Valerie, a child protection officer supported by BMS World Mission.

“The headteacher reached out to us and we went all the way to [Aber’s] home. I went with the lawyer for [BMS’ partner, the Ugandan Christian Lawyers Fraternity (UCLF)],” recalls Valerie. “The lawyer was very firm… and the headteacher even offered to let the girl study without paying school fees. Aber went back to school and is doing really well.”

Limited protection

But sadly, Valerie and her team can’t prevent every case of abuse from happening.

When Laker* was 12 years old, she was sexually abused by her uncle. It wasn’t until UCLF were contacted, weeks later, that Laker received the physical and emotional help she needed.

As Laker could not stay with her family, UCLF secured alternative accommodation for her and her younger brother, who had also suffered abuse. Valerie continues to support the children and visits them regularly. “They’re such beautiful children,” she says. “They’re doing really well and smiling from ear to ear.”

Christmas appeal

How are you feeling as we count down to Christmas? Stressed? Exhausted? Wondering where the year’s gone (again!)? How might the children you know answer that question? Excited? Happy? Hopeful? The sad reality is that for some children in northern Uganda, the answer to that question – and the prospect of more time at home with their family – would be ‘scared’.
It’s hard to believe, but these children were the lucky ones. They had people looking out for them who knew about UCLF, and who took action on their behalf.

“It’s very hard to deal with sexual abuse in this community,” explains Valerie. “If it’s fathers who are abusing… then the family conceal the abuse because they are afraid there will be no-one to take care of them.”

But Valerie and others at UCLF are working hard to encourage people to report abuse – wherever it comes from.

### Getting the word out

Radio is a popular form of communication in Uganda and UCLF have been quick to take advantage of this medium during lockdown. “Twice a month we’ve had radio trainings,” explains Valerie. “We’ve trained parents on how to take care of children, especially at such a time as this, where the pandemic has had their children stay at home for so long.”

Another project making use of radio broadcasts to raise awareness is the recently opened speech and language clinic in Gulu, the largest city in northern Uganda. The clinic is one of the few in the country. Historically, issues with children’s development, including speech and language, have not had much time in the spotlight. “There are very few schools that will accept and support children with disabilities,” explains Isaac, a BMS-supported speech and language therapist at the clinic.

### An exciting future

Both UCLF and the speech and language clinic are BMS partner organisations supported by BMS workers Linda and Lois. Excitingly, Linda and Lois are in the process of fully handing over the projects to Valerie, Isaac and other Ugandan staff. Thank God that this work will be continued by local people, funded with generous donations from BMS supporters. Pray for a smooth handover and for continued wisdom for Valerie and Isaac as they spearhead the projects.

“...they will not think that you are important”

One of Isaac’s patients is two-and-a-half-year-old Ephrahim who has been attending the clinic for the past 12 months. “If you can’t speak, they will not think that you are important,” explains Ephrahim’s mother, Grace. “If you take them to hospital, they say they cannot do anything… but if you’re coming here you are having hope.”

All photos in this article were taken at the speech and language therapy project in Uganda. Below, Mirriam and Isaac, who work to deliver vital speech and language therapy.
Ephrahim is now talking more, and his mum is looking forward to being able to enrol him at school.

Jeremiah, who has cerebral palsy, was referred to Isaac at two years old. At the time he wasn’t able to speak, walk, crawl or sit up by himself.

“Mr Isaac helped me a lot…” explains Lucy, Jeremiah’s mum. “Within five months [Jeremiah] was able to not only sit up but also to crawl. He is now walking! Now the problem is speech. We are now focusing on how he can speak well.”

Crucially, now that Jeremiah can move around and do more for himself, Lucy can go back to work, meaning vital income for the family.

Changing perceptions

As well as helping children practically, a lot of Isaac and Valerie’s work is about changing perceptions.

For Valerie, this means working with both schools and parents. “There’s a lot of physical abuse where children are caned and there are beatings,” says Valerie. “My role is to… train the caregivers, the parents, the grandparents and the teachers about alternative means of disciplining children instead of harming them.” Similarly for Isaac, his work often involves protecting as well as providing support for children. One mother that Isaac works with had to flee the family home with her daughter who has Down Syndrome as the child’s father was threatening to drown her.

Yet, for every difficult story and harmful attitude, there are people who are passionate about improving life for children in the country. “These children, we look at them as not important,” explains Jeremiah’s mum Lucy, “but they are very important.”

As societies, organisations and families rebuild after Covid-19, let’s pray that more and more children will be able to look forward to Christmas, and beyond that, a safe and promising future.

*Names changed

Could you give to help support children at risk in northern Uganda?

£30 can help Valerie to protect children like Aber and Laker* from forced marriages and abuse

£70 can help set up a speech and language practice in northern Uganda, offering vital therapy through people like Isaac, for vulnerable children and their families

£300 can help Valerie to give safeguarding training to teachers, local councillors and families so that abuse of more young children is prevented before it can even happen

Go to www.bmsworldmission.org/protectachild to give today.

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Thank you for standing

We couldn’t show you their faces.
But God knows every hair on their heads.
And you stood with them.

“It is a great encouragement to know that there are brothers and sisters from another country with me. It is an encouragement for me to know that they have seen my video,” says Z.

In the 2021 I Will Stand Harvest appeal, bold believers Z, J and K shared their testimonies, and we asked you to stand with them and with other Christians living the gospel no matter the cost.

We couldn’t share their names or show their faces. But you listened to their stories. And you chose to help. You gave. You prayed. You held I Will Stand church services. You shared Z, J and K’s stories on social media. And you made an impact. So far, you have donated nearly £80,000 to the BMS I Will Stand appeal, supporting people like Z to follow God’s calling and share the gospel in their home nations.

“I work with people from [a non-Christian] background, and sometimes we spend all day in difficult discussions,” explains Z. “That is why we need our brothers and sisters with whom we can experience rest, and with whom we can share our concerns and feelings. It encourages me personally and lets me feel that we are not alone, knowing that we have brothers and sisters [in the UK] who support us.”

Your gifts and prayers help Z, J and K to experience support, fellowship and rest as they preach the good news, disciple secret believers over social media, and follow their calling to live out the gospel even where it’s dangerous. You are equipping them to be the hands and feet of Jesus in communities they could never reach alone.

Turn the page to learn how Z decided to follow Jesus, to pray with her for her social media ministry reaching out to North Africa, and to discover the impact your gifts are having.
Z knows the God who seeks. The God who speaks. And the God who loves.

In I Will Stand, we heard how social media evangelist Z had to make the heartbreaking choice between following Jesus and a relationship with her family. Now, Z shares the beginning of her testimony – how all her searching led her to Christ.

“I am from a Muslim background, but I learned some things about Christianity from school and TV shows. When I saw how Christians prayed, I liked that. When I was 16, I came across a school that taught Christian lessons by correspondence. I contacted them because I wanted to know who Christ was. Of course, my parents were against this. But although my parents didn’t want it, I wanted to know who Christ was. And I did get to know him.

I hadn’t read the Bible, so my knowledge was not very deep. A few years later I went to Russia for college, and I got a copy of the Bible. I began to read it and I really liked it. I asked myself, ‘Why is God close in Christianity, but far away in Islam?’ Sometimes I would be sitting alone with God and I would ask, ‘Why do I feel like I’m talking to you and you’re listening to me, but when I pray in the normal Islamic way I don’t?’

I was really angry at God one day and I told him, ‘If you’re really there, speak to me!’ I turned on the radio and I heard the Arabic language. It was an Arab Christian channel that was only broadcast in Russia for one hour a day. I was asking God to speak to me, and he did through that channel.

I began to have this struggle between Islam and Christianity. Because I was really beginning to believe in Christ, but at the same time I couldn’t believe in his death on the cross. And if I couldn’t believe in his death, I couldn’t believe in his resurrection. It was a struggle for me.

Then one day I had a dream. I saw a child that had
died on the road because of an accident. I approached him and said, ‘Rise in Jesus’ name’ and the child rose up. This dream changed my life. I later found out that the boy that I saw in my dream really did get into an accident that day.

It was a long journey. God had to teach me many things and liberate me from many things. And every day I am still learning something new. I am currently studying theology through the internet [with BMS support]. My studies help me a lot firstly to have academic knowledge, and secondly in my work.

[Jesus] is taking care of me. If he had not loved me first, I could not love him. He gave me this love, he treated me as if I were the only one in this world and that showed how important I am to him. That is why I have been able to endure all of the difficulties I have passed through. The same Jesus Christ who died for me on the cross, is the one who lets me continue without focusing on the difficulties of sharing my faith.”

Z asks you to pray for North Africa

Pray that God may change the hearts of people in North Africa, starting with the believers. Pray that he gives them power so that they can speak of their faith without fear, but with wisdom.

Pray for the rulers and politicians, that they would know how to recover from Covid-19. As you know, many countries that were poor have become poorer, or poor people have become poorer, which is why I ask for prayer for the rulers so they can rule those countries, and so that they can lead the people.

Pray that the will of God in those countries will come to pass and that people will also seek his will. [Pray for] a little openness among the people, because the problem that exists in North Africa is that people, although open, are not open to seeing another person who used to be like them and who now has a different faith to theirs. That is why I ask for prayer so that there is an acceptance among people.

I Will Stand

the statistics

115 churches gave to I Will Stand

Around 100 of you joined us for I Will Stand Live

355 people gave to the appeal

Nearly £80,000 given so far to support Christians living the gospel no matter the cost

Your gifts could fund around:

80 church planters in Asia

OR Bible training for 842 Christians from the Middle East and North Africa

OR more than 13,000 Bibles for people who have yet to hear the good news

Z asks you to pray

It’s not too late to support I Will Stand. Head to www.bmsworldmission.org/stand to hear faith-filled stories from North Africa, the Middle East and Asia and to find out how you can support courageous Christians like Z today. We can do more in Jesus’ name when we stand together.
When the ordinary becomes impossible

Floods, climate calamities and power cuts won’t stop Louise and Peter Lynch from bringing hope to those around them in Bangladesh.

Words: Matty Fearon

When I catch up with Louise and Peter Lynch they are shrouded in Dhaka darkness, lit only by the torch on Louise’s phone. Just as they warned me when setting up this interview, we are experiencing a power cut typical of life in Bangladesh’s capital city. This is no energy crisis, this is life. There is no panic; Peter switches us to his mobile hotspot and we don’t miss a beat.

Louise and Peter began the day in darkness, up before dawn to make it in time for their teaching slots at the Christian College of Theology in Bangladesh. In a country growing increasingly Islamic – Christian charity Open Doors list ‘dictatorial paranoia’ and ‘Islamic oppression’ as the key threats to Christians – and where less than one per cent identify as Christian out of a population of over 170 million, the Lynches’ work among some of the least evangelised people on the planet is of vital importance.

But building up the next generation of Christian leaders is not the Lynches’ only focus. Just as crucial is their work responding to catastrophic floods. As Louise explains, “Floods are important agriculturally for Bangladesh but the ones that we’re responding to are much worse, these are extreme weather ones attributable to climate change. Travel and life in Bangladesh is predicated on the rivers flooding… but it’s not predicated on having your house filled with water.”

Situated in between the Himalayan mountains in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south, Bangladesh experiences two completely different environmental conditions, making it highly prone to natural disasters. The monsoons are hitting harder year on year, and the natural disasters are happening with more frequency.

“The people we were with recently in Rangpur are landless and rightless people,” says Peter. “They work as labourers in the field and all they have is their house. I was so struck by the various watermarks they showed me, where flooding had left their houses underwater.

“When that happens the family sits on the bed unable to get to the well, unable to go to the toilet and unable to cook as they cook in little wood-burning holes dug into the ground. Their roofs leak from above, the flood water rises from below, they sit on the bed and the ordinary becomes impossible.”

In September 2020, severe floods in the Rangpur area displaced tens of thousands of people. The area’s pastoral superintendent told Louise and Peter how he felt called to help the children and young people.
whose homes were destroyed or damaged, and who had lost all their schoolbooks, study notes and even their uniforms. Peter and Louise worked in partnership with APBAid and the Bangladesh Baptist Church to provide replacement school bags, pens, paper, food packages and school fees to 160 children from six villages, as well as a strong waterproof bag for each family, so that in future they can keep precious papers safe.

“The thing that really affected the superintendent was that on top of seeing kids with nowhere to live, all of their educational materials were gone,” explains Louise. “The government gives them a book each year but if you lose it, that’s it.”

“The families involved in the project live at the poorest ends of a very poor village, closest to the rivers and the greatest flood risk. What was striking was that the Christians live there among them. The local church gets in touch with the words, ‘We have families in great need, can you help us?’ And we think, ‘How many times can we ask BMS supporters to help?’”

Two years ago, BMS helped support families to recover their livelihoods in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by providing animals. That wasn’t possible this time around. Louise says, “Because people have got nothing, you can’t give them a seed or a chicken because they haven’t got anywhere to put a seed or a chicken. So, this time we focused in on getting children back into school. We need to give them hope.”

The importance of all this is illustrated by news from a nearby village. “Only one girl has returned back to school since they re-opened because all the rest have been married early. Part of our hope was to be able to keep education on the agenda for them. We helped 160 kids through the project and all except one came back for the second part of our training and were ready to re-enter school.”

“The project is not just about helping the families in the here and now, it’s about helping them plan for the future,” says Peter.

“When we start to talk about things like strategic planning, you realise you are coming from a different world. Actually life here is often about just surviving. There is a fatalism due to a lack of control and a real sense of never being able to change your circumstances.”

“The church though is bringing good news along with the help,” Louise adds. “It’s telling people about Jesus. Now they’ve got someone to pray to and someone to hope in which replaces hopelessness and uncertainty.”

You can support Louise and Peter as they continue ministering to people’s physical and spiritual needs in Bangladesh. Head to www.bmsworldmission.org/lplynch to find out more.
Dear friends,

During the first lockdown, Covid-19 was not so much of a threat, since about 75 per cent of Ugandans are 29 years old or younger. However, with the second wave, the threat has spread to everyone. Our biggest concern right now is that vaccines are hard to find in Uganda and less than a quarter of the population is vaccinated. Pray for us, that vaccines will become more available to our people.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused many people to lose their jobs. One woman, Pamela, lost her job as a caterer at a guesthouse because they could not afford to pay her. Pamela is a single mother with two children. Losing her job has complicated an already difficult situation. We prayed for her, and, with God's provision, she's been able to start a small business to help sustain her family.

Our work involves Jimmy leading University Community Church (UCC) and Phiona working part-time at BMS’ partner, Justice Livelihoods Health (JLH). Leading UCC involves counselling and praying for members, home visits, training and mentoring leaders, among other things. Phiona’s work focuses on supporting Jimmy and the JLH staff through finance and administration work. No two days are the same in our lives!

We’re both passionate about making disciples. When the lockdown was first announced, we continued to minister to UCC members through daily text messages, weekly gathering in small groups, monthly newsletters and sometimes through church online, as well as a few home visits.

We mainly work with young people who are university students at UCC. Their greatest need right now is for university programmes to return to normal so that they can resume their studies. As a church, we need a better church building to allow us to minister more effectively to the needs of our community.

Thank you so much for your generosity. More people are hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ because you support the work of BMS.

God bless you,

Jimmy and Phiona Okello
Gulu, Uganda
A great encouragement

Dear Hannah,

It is a great encouragement to see BMS World Mission holding the line in preaching the gospel and helping the needy. Long since I was a Baptist lay preacher in Leeds, reaching into the Dales, I am now retired at 87. Still able to work for the Lord, however, via blogs on the internet: reaching into 149 nations – although I long to reach more. Grace, mercy, and peace,
Douglas

Prayers for Wang Daeng

Dear Hannah,

I’m just writing to thank you and to praise the Lord for his work in Wang Daeng through the ministry of Helen and Wit [Boondeekhun]. The Lord is so amazing in the way he works through our ongoing, simple prayers! This latest news you have shared, involving the lives of Pratham One and Two and how the Lord connected them to Helen and Wit moving into Wang Daeng is something only the Lord can do!

It must have been several years ago now when you shared the 5 key [prayer] points for Helen and Wit, including one for the discipleship of Suree. Well I have to admit that I have expanded the discipleship of Suree to include each one who has come to the Lord since then; may they all be disciple well and begin to share their own faith with those they know and meet!

Be assured of my ongoing prayers, along with many others in the BMS family, for the future ministry in Wang Daeng.
God bless,
Ray

Positive change and powerful testimonies

Good afternoon Hannah,

I hope this finds you well. I just wanted to comment on the latest issue of Engage. I noticed that you have changed the wording and no longer write ‘you have done x, y, z and replaced that with ‘with your help we have done x, y, z. Thank you for making that change, it’s much better!

I was particularly impressed with the interviews with the three Christians in unnamed countries, and their testimonies.
May God continue to bless you in your work,
Annelies

Get in touch!

If you’ve been inspired or challenged by anything you’ve read in Engage, have been busy raising money for us, or have anything else you want to share, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch using one of the methods on page 2!
Sign up!

What's the weather like where you are?
BMS weekly update, 7 October 2021

Dear brothers and sisters,

Here in Peru we tend to use those terms sometimes more often that we use one another's names. I like the custom as it reminds me how we are all connected through

Get good news to your inbox every week.
Sign up to BMS World Mission’s free email update.
Head to www.bmsworldmission.org/stayinformed today.